DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 769 SP 022 436

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TITLE Staff Accountability Plan for New Mexico Schools.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented as part of a symposium on "Teacher Certification and Evaluation: Four States--Four Approaches" at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Canada, April 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; Competence; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Criteria; Inservice Teacher Education; Staff Development; State Programs; *State Standards; Teacher Certification; Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Qualifications; Tests
IDENTIFIERS *New Mexico Staff Accountability Plan

ABSTRACT

Based on 18 months of extensive research and study, the New Mexico State Department of Education developed the Staff Accountability Plan to address the issue of teacher accountability and certification. This plan, which consists of three provisions, came into existence as a result of concern expressed by the general public, legislators, and various segments of the educational community regarding the quality of performance of certified personnel and the instructional process. The Staff Accountability Plan includes: (1) a written basic skills assessment as a part of teacher training programs; (2) a written assessment of general and professional knowledge for initial certification; and (3) an integrated program of on-the-job performance evaluation utilizing criteria of effective teaching and staff development activities. The intent of the plan is to develop an approach which emphasizes the shared responsibility each professional educator and educational organization must assume to assure quality instruction. (Author/JMK)

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STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

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SP 022 436

Paper presented as a part of a symposium on
Teacher Certification and Evaluation: Four States - Four Approaches
1983 AERA Annual Meeting
Montreal, Canada - April 11-15, 1983

ABSTRACT
STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

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Based on eighteen months of extensive research and study, the New Mexico State Department of Education developed the Staff Accountability Plan to address the issue of teacher accountability and certification. This plan, which consists of three provisions, came into existence as a result of expressed concern by the general public, legislators, and various segments of the educational community regarding the quality of performance of certified personnel and the instructional process. The Staff Accountability Plan addresses: a written basic skills assessment as a part of teacher training programs; a written assessment of general and professional knowledge for initial certification; and an integrated program of on-the-job performance evaluation utilizing criteria of effective teaching and staff development activities. The intent of the plan is to develop an approach which emphasizes the shared responsibility each professional educator and educational organization must assume to assure quality instruction.

STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

The Staff Accountability Plan for New Mexico Schools was the result of eighteen months of extensive research and study. These activities culminated when the plan was adopted by the State Board of Education in November, 1981. The Staff Accountability Plan addresses the expressed concern by the general public, legislators, and various segments of the educational community regarding the quality of performance of certified personnel and the instructional process.

Beginning with the 1980 New Mexico Legislative Session, monies were appropriated to the State Department of Education to conduct an accountability study of various factors associated with the certification and evaluation of local school district certified personnel. The State Department of Education focused on two aspects: the preparation of the certified staff and the quality of student learning.

New Mexico was fortunate to have had resources provided by a legislature which was interested in responding to national media coverage of problems in education; such as, up to 20% of teachers were not adequately skilled in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic they were supposed to teach or SAT scores of 1980 high school seniors who planned to major in education were 48 points below the national average in math, and 35 points below the verbal component (where education majors ranked 14 out of a field of 16). To add to these problems was the fact that beginning in 1973, enrollment in education began dropping drastically (about half

in the last ten years). In coping with this situation, many institutions appear to have lowered their standards to stay in business, for poor students are better than no students.

With education in New Mexico receiving approximately 75% of state appropriations, a concerned legislature was interested in responding to such accusations, correcting deficiencies, refuting inaccuracies with meaningful data, and demonstrating a good faith effort to help insure a quality teaching and administrative staff for the state.

Work on the statewide accountability plan began in March, 1980, with the appointment of the State Department of Education Steering Committee for the New Mexico Staff Accountability Plan. This steering committee was charged with researching the broad, complex, and sensitive issue of teacher accountability. The committee approached the study by extensively reviewing the work of nationally recognized experts and organizations with experience in developing and implementing accountability programs and models. States which already had accountability programs established were contacted and extensive information on teacher testing, internships, developmental models, etc., was requested and obtained.

The investigation centered around the implementation of accountability processes, professional development methods, teacher preparation programs, merit systems, and teacher evaluation methods. Additionally, investigations were made into the issues and procedures for competency testing such as how testing might contribute to the accountability of certified staff in the schools, what the potential impact of a testing program might be, and how various legal considerations involving possible ethnic bias and discrimination in

testing might affect the program.

In the Fall of 1980 the State Superintendent appointed an Accountability Study Task Force which included superintendent-level individuals as well as representatives of institutions of higher education, teacher organizations, school administrators, teachers, parent groups, and professional organizations. These individuals were actively involved in reviewing and synthesizing ten various approaches to certified staff accountability. Additionally, in April, 1981, the State Department hosted a statewide accountability forum for discussion of issues, options, and alternatives with experts from throughout the country.

From these activities came the drafting of six proposed recommendations for presentation to the State Board of Education. The recommendations addressed: teacher preparation and basic skills; initial certification requirements; teacher testing; certification renewal; performance evaluation; and technical assistance. Copies of the draft recommendations were distributed to school districts, professional organizations, and interested individuals throughout the state. Several public meetings were held in different regions to gather reaction to the recommendations. Following these public meetings, the recommendations were consolidated into three areas addressing: a basic skills assessment for teacher education programs; an examination of general education, communication skills and education methods and practices for initial certification; and possible changes in certification requirements and development of an approach to performance evaluation partially based on demonstrated classroom teaching competency. On November 9, 1981, the three preceding recommendations were adopted by the State Board of Education as the Staff Accountability Plan for New Mexico Schools.

Provision I

Provision I requires a basic skills accountability plan from teacher preparation programs in New Mexico as a condition for approval after July 1, 1983. A component of the plan must include a written examination in reading, writing, and math. Students enrolling in teacher preparation programs after July 1, 1983, must demonstrate adequate skills by passing the examinations prior to completion of their training program. The examination and performance standard will be selected by each institution. In order to ensure consistency, the basic skills accountability plan will be reviewed by the Professional Standards Commission and approved by the State Board of Education.

The Professional Standards Commission, working in conjunction with the teacher preparation program administrators throughout the state have adopted a comprehensive admission plan approach which incorporates: a description of the program's basic skills accountability plan; identification of the objectives, skills, and rationale for selection of the written examination in reading, writing, and math; and procedures for administering the exams, determining the passing scores, and providing remediation. Full implementation of Provision I of the Staff Accountability Plan for New Mexico teacher preparation programs is to occur by July 1, 1983.

In Provision II, the State Board of Education requires an examination of general education, communication skills, methods and practices, and content specialization knowledge of all applicants as one of the requirements for initial teaching and administrative certification.

Based on research and review work conducted by State Department

of Education staff regarding feasible options, a Provision II Staff Accountability Council was asked to assess an advanced copy of the new Core Battery tests of the National Teacher Examinations (NTE). In order to determine the appropriateness of these examinations for New Mexico's needs, the Council recommended that validation and field testing activities be initiated. Utilizing a validation process developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS) and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, the following objectives are being addressed: relationship of the content of NTE tests to the content of general education and teacher preparation programs in New Mexico; and the level of performance on the NTE tests expected of a candidate who possesses the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to complete an approved teacher preparation program and who will be entering the classroom to teach.

Additionally, New Mexico has required ETS to collect data on a third objective - the relevance of content and skills tested by NTE to the classroom situation for initially certifying teachers. Since incorporating the data collection methodology for content relevance in the classroom for New Mexico, ETS has begun incorporating this third objective in its proposals to other states for validation work regarding the NTE.

Many educators from teacher preparation programs and K-12 classrooms throughout the state are being involved in providing professional judgements regarding the three objectives. Field testing of the various examinations is scheduled for April, 1983, for the purpose of providing support information. The implementation schedule for Provision II of the Staff Accountability Plan is as follows: by July 1, 1983, all applicants for initial certification will be

required to achieve a passing score on the NTE Core Battery, assuming proper validation for New Mexico. In addition to the NTE Core Battery, by July 1, 1984, applicants seeking initial certification/endorsement(s) in 22 specific areas will be required to pass an appropriate content specialization examination; and by July 1, 1984, educators currently certified in New Mexico who seek to add a certificate or endorsement in any of the 22 areas must pass the appropriate content specialization examination. The 22 areas are: Art Education; Biology and General Science; Business Education; Chemistry, Physics, and General Science; Early Childhood Education; Education in the Elementary School; Education of the Mentally Retarded; Educational Administration and Supervision; English Language and Literature; French; German; Guidance Counselor; Home Economics Education; Industrial Arts Education; Mathematics; Media Specialist-Library and Audiovisual Services; Music Education; Physical Education; Reading Specialist; Social Studies; Spanish; and Speech-Communication and Theatre.

These tests will accomplish certain objectives reasonably well. They will provide an indication of the level of knowledge an individual has acquired. The tests will not tell us how effective an individual will be as a classroom teacher. As much as this point is stressed, the comment most frequently made is, "Oh, that test isn't going to insure quality teaching." That is absolutely correct! While the test will not insure quality teaching it will provide more information than we presently have on the level of knowledge an individual has acquired.

Provision III

To address the issue of effective classroom performance, Provision III of the Staff Accountability Plan directs the State Department of Education to address the evaluation of certified personnel based on identified criteria defining effective classroom teaching performance by July 1, 1983, and by July 1, 1984, to incorporate such performance indicators into evaluation structures, recommend modifications to certification procedures, and recommend programs to implement performance-based evaluations.

After extensive research on effective teaching, State Department of Education staff members, working with a Provision III Accountability Advisory Council, developed 12 proposed teaching competencies which incorporate 63 statements indicating effective teaching. Ten thousand surveys containing competencies and indicators were distributed statewide to educators, legislators, school board members, and the general public. The purpose of the survey was to determine the degree of consensus regarding which of the competencies and indicators are considered essential for effective teaching. The results of the survey narrowed the field to the following eight teaching competencies:

1. The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the subjects taught and their relevance to students;
2. the teacher demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and the subject taught;
3. the teacher demonstrates a positive attitude toward students and helps them develop realistic positive self-concepts;
4. The teacher creates an atmosphere conducive to learning and self-discipline;

5. the teacher initiates, reinforces, and encourages student involvement in instruction;
6. the teacher provides opportunities for students to develop qualities of leadership, responsibility, and self-direction;
7. the teacher communicates effectively in the content area and maintains a professional rapport with students; and
8. the teacher appropriately utilizes a variety of teaching methods and resources for each area taught.

Each of the competencies has from two to eleven indicators. An example of a competency with indicators is:

1. The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the subjects taught and their relevance to students. The teacher indicates this by:
   a. communicating to students the instructional intent or plan at the beginning of a learning experience;
   b. obtaining feedback that indicates learners recognize the purpose and importance of topics and activities; and
   c. communicating accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the subject.

The information obtained from the survey will be used in working with volunteer school districts to pilot several processes for utilizing the teaching competencies in the evaluation of certified personnel. Assuming success in incorporating the teaching competencies into evaluation instruments, and meaningful application in the field, the State Department will then proceed with recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding the demonstration of the competencies of effective teaching for recertification decisions. Also

incorporated into Provision III is the development of a structured support system during the period of initial certification for the purpose of strengthening a beginning teacher's skills and removing deficiencies prior to application for the second certification as well as providing for assistance to teachers and administrators in developing necessary skills for the implementation of a personnel evaluation system based on the identified competencies. Results of this joint effort between the State Department of Education, local education agencies, and colleges of education will form the basis for future recommendations for recertification decisions and the development of programs to implement performance-based evaluation.

It is the feeling of the State Department of Education that the procedures and efforts to date are a positive step forward in ensuring quality instruction in New Mexico's public schools. Additionally, the Staff Accountability Plan serves the prospective teacher by defining at the outset of preparation the standards which must be met in order to become a practioner in New Mexico.